

ARTICLE VIII: Definitions
Definitions Related to Revised Environmental Overlay Districts and Steep Slopes

Comment: The following definitions related to the revised environmental overlay districts, including RSCOD, MDOD, and LOD, and to steep slope standards should be added to Article VIII of the Zoning Ordinance and amend existing definitions where noted.

- (A) **Active channel.** The area of the stream channel that is subject to frequent flows (approximately once per one and one-half years), and that includes the portion of the channel below where the floodplain flattens.
- (B) **Adverse Impact.** An impact that creates, imposes, aggravates, or leads to inadequate, impractical, unsafe, unhealthy conditions on a site or degrades or damages environmental or cultural resources on a site proposed for development or on off-site property or facilities.
- (C) **Bedrock:** Rock formation that underlies a surface covering such as soil or extends through the soil as a rock outcrop.
- (D) **Closed Depression.** In a limestone area, a distinctive bowl-shaped depression of varied sizes in the land surface. It is characterized by internal drainage, and an unbroken ground surface.
- (E) **Ecosystem.** A complex network of organic communities and their interaction with their environment.
- (F) **Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM).** An official map of a community on which the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has delineated areas in the floodplain subject to inundation of the base flood and the risk premium zones based on the technical data in the Flood Insurance Study.
- (G) **Flood Insurance Study.** The official report provided by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) that includes flood profiles and the water surface elevation of the base flood.
- (H) **Headwaters.** The source of a stream or river.
- (I) **Karst.** A type of terrain characterized by closed depressions and/or sinkholes, caves, rock pinnacles, and underground drainage, and which results from solution of limestone and dolomite bedrock. Much of the limestone conglomerate area is considered karst.

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- (J) **Karst Feature Buffer.** An area established from the outermost edge of Karst features where land disturbance is prohibited.
- (K) **Karst Features.** Karst landforms including but not limited to caves, sinkholes, significant fissures/cracks, vadose shafts, or other karst anomaly associated with calcareous geologic formations.
- (L) **Land-Disturbing Activity.** Any grading, scraping, excavating, trenching, filling of land, dumping of fill materials (including but not limited to dumping of soil, concrete, and construction debris), bulk outdoor storage, clearing of trees or vegetation and any construction, reconstruction, or significant alteration of a structure.
- (M) **Limestone.** Geologic formation that is highly water-soluble and is characterized by numerous underground caves and surface sinkholes; it is a natural groundwater aquifer and good water supply source. Limestone consists of a conglomerate of various small rocks cemented together with a carbonate matrix and containing calcareous geologic formations. In appearance, it is very similar to concrete.
- (N) **LOD.** Limestone Overlay District, as defined in Section 4-1900 of the Zoning Ordinance.
- (O) **Management Buffer.** An area designed to protect a stream or river and its associated floodplain from adverse upland development impacts. The “50-foot management buffer” is included within the Protected River and Stream Corridor, as shown on the RSCOD Map.
- (P) **Maximum Extent Feasible.** No feasible and prudent alternative exists, and all possible efforts to comply with the regulation or minimize potential harmful or adverse impacts have been undertaken. Economic considerations may be taken into account but shall not be the overriding factor in determining “maximum extent feasible.”
- (Q) **MDOD.** Mountainside Development Overlay District, as defined in Section 4-1600 of the Zoning Ordinance.
- (R) **Minor Utilities.** Above- and below-ground electrical transmission lines, except for overhead electrical transmission lines and distribution feeder lines that collect and transmit over 110 KV of power; above- and below-ground natural gas lines; flood control or drainage facilities; transportation or communications utilities, and similar facilities of public agencies or public utilities; utilities that are necessary to support legally established uses and involves only minor structures such as electrical distribution lines, poles, or cables; switch boxes; transformer boxes; cap

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banks; and underground water and sewer lines. Such “minor utility” facilities generally do not have employees on site, and the services may be publicly or privately provided. “Minor utility” does not include uses more specifically defined in this Ordinance, including but not limited to “telecommunication use and/or structure.”

(S) **Mitigation Measures.** Methods used to alleviate or lessen the adverse impacts of development.

(T) **Moderately Steep Slope Area.** Land areas with slopes from 15% to 25% (identified as slope Class D on Loudoun County Soils Map).

(U) **Package Sewage Disposal System.** A private sewage disposal system releasing treated effluent into either the ground or a surface water source. A small system is intended to serve between 2 and 24 dwelling units.

(V) **Primary Conservation Area.** Primary conservation areas include:

(1) Protected River and Stream Corridors (including public water reservoirs), as depicted on the RSCOD Map (Section 4-2000);

(2) Steep slopes, as defined in Article VIII of this Ordinance;

(3) Mountain ecosystem sensitive areas, as defined by the combination of primary critical elements of elevation, soils, slopes, and forest cover, and as depicted on the MDOD Map (Section 4-1600); and

(4) Limestone/Karst areas, as depicted on the LOD Map (Section 4-1900).

(W) **Protected Corridor** (also “Protected River and Stream Corridor”). All lands included within the River and Stream Corridor Overlay District, as defined in Section 4-2000 of the Zoning Ordinance. A Protected Corridor is an area of natural or established vegetation along a stream or river that is sensitive to changes and shall be maintained in a natural state to:

(1) Protect a dynamic and healthy river and stream corridor ecosystem;

(2) Ensure that water quality is protected;

(3) Protect against the damages of soil erosion and flooding;

(4) Fulfill fish and wildlife needs; and

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- (5) Perpetuate biological diversity and natural resource management for their educational, enjoyment and aesthetic value.
- (X) **Protected River and Stream Corridor.** See definition of “Protected Corridor”, above.
- (Y) **Ridgeline.** A ground line located at the highest elevation of a drainage divide for the major watersheds mapped by the County or other prominent ridgeline visible from the public right-of-way as identified during a conservation design process *(Comment: This definition needs to be discussed during the public review process).*
- (Z) **Riparian Area.** The land area adjacent to a stream, river, lake, or wetland that contains vegetation that due to the presence of water, is distinctly different from the vegetation of adjacent areas. A riparian area will vary in width depending on the particular stream, river, lake, wetland, or other body of water.
- (AA) **RSCOD.** River and Stream Corridor Overlay District, as defined in Section 4-2000 of the Zoning Ordinance.
- (BB) **Silviculture.** The art and science of controlling the establishment, growth, composition, health and quality of forests and woodlands, typically dependent on Best Management Practices. In Loudoun County it is a component of healthy forest management that is limited to tree and shrub planting, limited tree clearing and clearing of invasive species; and tree pruning and trimming. Silviculture does not include clear cutting of forest.
- (CC) **Sinkhole.** A closed, vertical opening or closed depression in the land surface and formed by solution of carbonate bedrock and downward movement of soil into bedrock voids or by collapse of underlying caves.
- (DD) **Slope.** The average land gradient expressed as a percentage. Slope average shall be determined on the basis of mapping units two (2) acres or more using the County base planimetric and topographic maps or other topographic maps, elevations, etc., prepared by such persons licensed to perform surveys to determine such information. *See also* related definitions of “Steep Slopes,” “Moderately Steep Slope Area,” and “Steep Slope Area” in this Article.
- (EE) **Steep Slope.** Land having a slope of fifteen (15) percent or greater as shown on the Loudoun County Soils Map, as amended from time-to-time by the County Soil Scientist, and as shown on the Loudoun County Steep Slopes Map. All steep slopes are subject to the standards in Section 5-1508 of this Ordinance.

(FF) **Steep Slope Area.** Land areas with either of the following characteristics:

(1) Slopes greater than 25% (identified as slope Class E on the Loudoun County Soils Map); or

(2) “Moderately steep slope areas,” as defined above, together with Unstable Soils including the following soil series: Morven (soil mapping unit 13), Airmont (units 27 and 59), Lew (unit 88), and Springwood (units 90 and 91), as described in the Interpretive Guide to the Use of Soils Maps in Loudoun County.

(GG) **Stream Bank.** The uppermost limit of the stream’s active channel, usually marked by a break in slope.

(HH) **Substantial Improvement.** For purposes of the Environmental Overlay Districts, substantial improvement means any reconstruction, rehabilitation, addition or other improvement of a structure, the cost of which equals or exceeds 50 percent of the market value of the structure either (a) before the improvement or repair is started, or (b) if the structure has been damaged and is being restored, before the damage has occurred, regardless of the actual repair work performed.

(II) **Unstable Soils.** Unstable soils include the following soil series: Morven (soil mapping unit 13), Airmont (units 27 and 59), Lew (unit 88), and Springwood (units 90 and 91), as described in the Interpretive Guide to the Use of Soils Maps in Loudoun County.

(JJ) **Wetland.** An area that is inundated or saturated by surface or groundwater at a frequent and duration sufficient to support, and under natural conditions does support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soils conditions, commonly known as hydrophytic vegetation, and as identified by the Corps of Engineers or State of Virginia.